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Heard

ДНЕПРОВСКИЙ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫЙ
МЕДИЦИНСКИЙ
ОБЩЕЖИТИЕ
ПРАЧЕЧНАЯ

C. He...

Memorial of Rev. Jared M. Heard:

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT HIS FUNERAL IN FITCHBURG,

MARCH 24, 1864.

BY REV. EDMUND H. SEARS.

REPRINTED FROM THE "MONTHLY RELIGIOUS MAGAZINE."

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SERMON.

JOHN xi. 25, 26: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

PERHAPS our Christian faith is never so strong and clear as when we stand by the coffin and the grave. For how great is the contrast between yesterday and to-day! — yesterday, when life was so full and abounding; to-day, when nothing is left with us but the pale garments of mortality which it wore. Therefore we say with tenfold assurance, These were not the friend which we cherished and loved. He has risen out of them; he has cast aside this circumstance of clay, that he may enter more completely into life. We cannot think of him as dead: a spirit that throbbed with so much fire and energy, and was so swift to do the Master's will, has only been relieved of its clogs and fetters, that its activities may go on without hinderance. The summons came to him sooner than to most of us, — the summons to higher ministries in the kingdom of Christ. He has gone from us because there was some vacant place for him to fill, some other service prepared for him to do; for, if we could look through all the shining ranks above us, we should see that God never summons his servants too late or too soon, but in his own divine and beautiful order.

And yet the parting is hard to bear. When the old man dies who has outlived his generation, and life has run its full course, it is sweet and pleasant to lay down its load. We

feel then that there is no mystery in death. There is nothing to be explained. It was not so with our friend and brother. His plan of life had been fondly marked out, and he had entered with ardor upon its execution: its ties were woven about him in all their strength and tenderness. We were rejoicing with him and with you in the prospect of an energetic and successful ministry, stretching on through happy years; and our disappointments are as grievous as our expectations had been bright. And our grief is more deep and bitter, because these are times when young men are worth so much to us, and it is so hard to spare them. The tidings from the Pacific coast had just smitten us with unwonted sadness, and the news of your bereavement fell upon hearts already afflicted. Your loss, too, is the loss of the whole community; for it is so much zeal and youthful energy devoted to noble ends taken from us in the hour of its brightest promise and our greatest need. Death has come among you, robed in solemn mystery, — mystery, undoubtedly, which would be explained to us, could we look from the other side, and see those higher and wider ministries to which our brother has gone.

In the brief space which I shall occupy, let me bring before you some of the facts which best embody his life and character. Perhaps they will help you in laying up his memory in your hearts, and keeping it as the treasure of future years.

Our brother had just completed his thirty-fourth year. This short life was begun at Wayland on the 16th of March, 1830. There his childhood opened; there he became familiarized with the fields and streams, and drank the spirit of the hills. Perhaps you knew his love of Nature, and his enthusiastic studies in natural history. These he learned first amid the quiet scenery on the banks of the Sudbury River, where he grew up. There, while he imbibed health, and strength of mind and muscle, he had an open eye for all the processes of Nature. He loved books, and was one of the best scholars in the school: I think he loved the open book of Nature somewhat more. As his mind unfolded, he studied the habits of insects, watched them in their transformations; studied the habits and

diseases of plants, would discourse of them by the half-hour; entered enthusiastically upon comparative anatomy, and preserved skeletons to explain it. Had he devoted himself to these pursuits, he would have been such a disciple as Agassiz would have delighted in. He loved to study natural scenery minutely, as if it were the lines of a human face. He would not leave a grand mountain prospect till he could close his eyes, and still see it photographed upon his memory so as to be sure he could carry away the picture; and, as Wordsworth says, have it "flash upon that inward eye which is the bliss of solitude."

At the age of nineteen he entered Brown University; passed honorably through its course of studies, and graduated in 1853. In that year, and only a day or two previous to his commencement, an event took place which shaped his whole future course, and exerted a plastic influence over all his spiritual life. You that never had it can never know that priceless treasure of a household, — an only sister or an only daughter. Such our brother had, — a sister, a little younger than himself, who, in beauty, affection, and sweetness of spirit, was all that could draw forth a brother's devotion and love. But the angels beckoned her, and she went away. On the day that she was to start for Providence to strew flowers upon her brother's opening path, she closed her eyes upon this world for ever, and the flowers were strewn upon her grave. Grief takes the deepest hold of the strongest natures. The brother's heart was well-nigh breaking, for his affections were exceedingly strong; and for a long time he could see nothing but that blank spot in the household, and that one grave in the old churchyard. For days and weeks, the charm of life and the charm of Nature were completely broken; for all her sights and sounds had been associated with a voice now hushed for ever, and he could only answer to them in the words of bereavement: —

"The wild bee with his buglet fine,
The blackbird singing free,
Break both thy mother's heart and mine:
They speak to us of thee."

He went to Susan's grave, and kneeled upon it, and prayed for light and peace. The light and the peace came at length, and ripened into high resolves, lofty aims, and holy vows. Here was illustrated that beautiful law of the Divine Providence, which we do well to remember at this hour, — the law of compensation, that God never takes treasures from us without giving treasures in return. Our brother's attention was now turned with great earnestness to the themes of immortality, the mystery of death, and the meaning of life. The yearnings of the heart directed him to these themes, and he brought to them his powers of logic and argument. A self-consecration to the work of life more entire than ever before, and a religious earnestness and zeal which never ceased to burn, came to him from this great sorrow of his father's house. These ripened into resolves so distinct and clear, that they became a voice within him that called him to the ministry of Christ. "I hear it," he would say, — "I hear it, urging me on; and I dare not disobey it."

Let me read an extract from one of his letters on that memorable morning in his experience, when the Divine Grace seemed to dawn like a new sunrise upon his soul. It will show you how he had come to regard death, and how he would exhort us to triumph over it now. "I visited the spot," he writes, "where she lies, the morning that I left home. The rising sun had bathed the whole firmament in a flood of liquid gold; and that holy quiet which rests down upon every thing in the country between the hours of day-dawn and sunrise threw its peculiar charm over my spirit, and I felt happy. I could not refrain from exclamations of thanksgiving and praise. My soul instinctively bowed in adoration to the God of the morning, to the God of the resurrection, of whose morning the gilded sky was such a perfect symbol. I kneeled at the head of Susan's grave, and offered an earnest prayer for wisdom to teach me, strength to assist me, as I was again to start from the quiet haven of home upon the boisterous and deceitful ocean of the world. Into that short half-hour were crowded pleasures unspeakable, whose elevating influence even now hangs around my pathway." Such was the spot

where he took his consecrating vows. How nobly he kept them!

Before entering upon his chosen work, he went to Providence as a teacher of one of the public schools. But a new trial awaited him, — one of the hardest trials to a mind ardent and active like his. A partial failure of health compelled him to quit his school, and give over his plans. But friends who prized his worth, and saw the power that was in him, and the good he could do, always crossed his path. A sea-captain generously offered him a passage to the East Indies, and he sought the restoratives of a sea-voyage. On his return, he entered the Theological School at Cambridge; but, before completing the three-years' course, was compelled to leave his studies, and return to Wayland. His mind chafed under these restraints and disappointments, and preyed upon itself. To have the prizes of life snatched away as he was ready to grasp them, because of some thorn in the flesh, some nerve that would get out of tune and play its discords, some rebellious lobe of the brain that refused to do its office, — this for some months was his painful experience. But the hour at length came, and he rose out of this depression into the clear spiritual activity for which he was longing. An invitation came to him from the society at Clinton to supply their pulpit. He went joyfully, and breathed all his enthusiasm into his work. The body, touched and magnetized by an indomitable will, refused no longer to work in harmony with the spirit within.

He preached at Clinton with great acceptance; where he was ordained Aug. 25, 1858. His active ministry there of five years was remarkably successful. His parish honored and loved him. His voice, I believe, was gladly heard, not only in his own pulpit, but in the whole circuit of his exchanges. The town appreciated his talents and worth, and selected him as its representative in the Legislature during the session of 1862. Though one of the youngest members, it was not in his nature to be an inactive one. One of the most important acts of the session — that of the famous river-meadow case — affected vitally the interests of his native

town. He studied it, and possessed himself fully of all its merits; and, when it came up for debate, he urged his argument with a fulness and clearness, which, a member told me, left nothing to be said upon that side.

In the prosecution of his successful ministry at Clinton, your invitation came to him to be your pastor. It was a severe trial to part with his people, with whom his relations had been so kind and harmonious; but he felt that he must do it. He went there with no preparatory experience, and he saw that the exhaustive draughts upon the mind and brain could not be borne much longer. Doubtless he decided wisely; and he came among you, resolved to use the results of his five-years' labor, and begin his ministry anew. With how much self-devotion and ability, in the pulpit, in the parish, in the Sunday school, and how these promised to your society a new era of increase and prosperity, you know yourselves; and you manifested to him your appreciation of his worth by tokens of kindness and generosity which he felt deeply and gratefully. One short year of his ministry had revealed him to you, and endeared him to your hearts.

His whole ministry is embraced in a period of six years; and few within so brief a time have given more decisive promise of a character calculated to impress itself deeply and beneficently upon society around. He brought to his work a combination of gifts that were the earnest of an ever-increasing success, — a clear and logical mind; brain-power of large volume and electric activity; zeal that never flagged; a voice of clarion fulness, that commanded audience, obeyed the rapid movement of his thought, and swept the largest congregations with the utmost ease; rare extemporaneous gifts when minded to put them forth, which made his unstudied efforts most impressive; an eye and countenance that spake and answered quick to the kindling of his thoughts and emotions; a purpose to train these elements of oratory, and consecrate them; sympathies warm and tender; a love of the young, and a power of adaptation to their wants and ways, by which he touched and quickened the life of every Sunday school with which he was connected; a love of constant ac-

tion so intense, that rest became irksome, and work was turned into play; ready sympathy with the sick and the suffering, so that in the sick-room he was quick to see what was needed almost as a nurse or a mother; charity to the poor, whom he sought out with open hand; humanity, large and inclusive, embracing his country and his kind; above all, a conscientious devotion to his Master's cause, that kept unbroken its early vows. These gifts, we believed, when in their full development, and freed from those early clogs and limitations, would have given him a growing power and influence for good in the community, which few of his profession have attained. Alas that the ordination-vows and congratulations should be followed so soon by our sorrows around his bier!

But he has gone to that higher ministry in the kingdom of God in the full bloom of his faculties, and we resign him without a murmur. Questions which he had pondered and prayed over are now resolved by open vision. He brought to the investigation of all subjects a good deal of argumentative power and dialectical skill, trying to separate the dross of error from the gold of truth. These he brought to religious themes, always afraid of having his understanding imposed upon; resolved that the reason and the heart should both be satisfied. Even in the last hour, when the shadows of death were gathered thickly around him, and this world was fading from his sight, he roused his faculties for a moment, shook off the gathering unconsciousness, and enounced the syllogisms on which he rested his faith. Said he, rising from his pillow, and speaking in the deep, full tones of his voice, "Immortality! how they perplex and mystify!" And pressing his hand upon his breast, "Here is the proof; here is demonstration." He added, "I am; *therefore God is.*" This is almost identical with the famous argument by which Descartes sought to demolish the strongholds of atheism, and revolutionize the philosophy of his times. He turned to his dearest friend with a smile which might be regarded as a farewell benediction and a smile of triumphant faith, and then sank again into the embraces of death. The smile lingered on the countenance after the spirit had gone, giving it the appear-

ance of tranquil slumber. These were the last flashings of his clear and vigorous mind, and the total darkness immediately followed, — total on our side: on the other side, where the heavens opened, and the earth receded and was no more, it was the pale twilight of our earthly guessings and gropings exchanged for the open splendors of noonday.

His vigorous intellect, however, was not nourished at the expense of the heart. This is already implied in the incidents of our biographical sketch. It is hardly possible to conceive of home-affections more ardent and clinging than his. There was good reason why they should be so. No son was ever more signally blessed in the fondness and faithfulness of parental love. All that he was, and all that he hoped to be, he was never weary of ascribing to its guidance and care. His letters breathe the very fragrance of filial piety. No husband was ever more careful of the treasure of his heart and home. These domestic ties woven about him so fondly, bringing out the most beautiful shades of his character, whether you regard him as the husband, the son, the father, or the brother, give, I know, a tenfold sharpness to the bereavements of this hour. I wish that any words of mine could assuage the wounds of these lacerated affections. I am very sure, that, if prayers out of the deepest places of a thousand hearts could save to the bereaved mother the little Mabel of her desolated home, she should be saved. To the widowed wife, who was the light of his house, to the afflicted parents, one of whom is watching now for the angel summons, to the brothers whose minds are thronged with so many sad and sweet memories from the old familiar places, we commend this precious truth, one of the beneficent laws of the Divine Providence: "What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." God is not revealed before us, but ever behind us; and somewhere in the future, perhaps not far off, you will see the clouds of this darker hour lighted up with the glories of the Everlasting Love. Remember that the same Saviour who stood by the grave at Bethany stands also by this grave; and that his words are addressed to our human nature, bereft and bleeding at the touch of death:

"He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Brothers and sisters of this church and society, we sympathize deeply with you in your bereavement. You had welcomed your young pastor to your homes and hearts with a unanimity and cordiality which promised abundant and precious fruits. Do not imagine that death has reaped them all. Do not imagine that your pastor's ministry has ceased among you. Some one has said very touchingly, "We never know that an angel has been with us till we behold his parting wing." Certain it is that the virtues of those whom we honor and love never live in our memories with such immortal fragrance as when death has placed upon them his sanctifying seal. Never do the words which have truly moved us, and cheered us on, speak to us so eloquently as when the tongue that uttered them is still. Never does the example of a life that was true and brave shine with so bright a lustre as when the spirit that inspired it has put on its immortality. The message of your pastor I doubt not would be, if those sealed lips could once more have language, "Remember the words that I spake unto you, being yet present with you." You will remember them all the more vividly now that you are to see him no more. In many an hour of thought and contemplation, they will start up in your memories, and call you to duty and to God. May they call with tenfold urgency and persuasiveness, now that we feel more sensibly at how slight a touch the strongest man may drop these coverings of mortality, and enter upon the great retribution! Now that the shepherd is smitten and taken from you, may the Great Shepherd be nearer to you, and gather you more tenderly into his heavenly fold!

It would be wrong to close these meditations in any other strain than that triumphant faith with which our brother closed his life. We do know that we are immortal, because of these yearnings and aspirations towards the better land. It is not evidence that we lack, nor a revelation to us of its scenes and employments, but minds and affections brought into blissful harmony with its heavenly state. With these,

heaven will be to us, not a dream, but a great reality; and the death of those we love will only bring it nearer and nearer. Let it be revealed as it may outwardly, it will only be to us an unsubstantial vision, so long as the attractions of this world only draw us to itself. But when we love the same employments which they love, follow the same ends, adore the same divine Saviour, we can say indeed, "I know that I am immortal," for the attractions of the world to come are then all-prevailing; and the voice will ever fall down to us from the innumerable multitudes, Come where the conflict has ended, and the wicked cease from troubling; come where the clouds and the thunders roll far beneath you; come where the leaf never grows yellow in the bower, and the changes are only from glory to glory; come where the walls of sect have fallen down, and the chorus of the one catholic Church, embracing all the good of all the centuries, ascends around one Lord and Saviour in one anthem of praise; come where the fellowship of saints is open as the noon, and human friendships and ties have no breaks and no farewells. These will be the invitations ever heard above us, more distinct and full with every new friend that has passed on. Then, like our brother, you will know that you are immortal; for, in all your cares and duties and sorrows, you will hear murmurs in the soul like the music of heaven, mellowed by distance, —

"As travellers hear the billows' roll
Before they reach the sea."